Blanquitud and environment. The legacies of liberal multiculturalism in the formulation of the rights of nature and the environment

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Abstract: The ideas of multiculturalism and plurinationalism in contemporary Latin American constitutionalism still maintain the modern and western language of human rights. This essay seeks to problematize the section dedicated to the rights of nature in the Ecuadorian Constitution of 2008 and its relationship to a sociological category called "*blanquitud*" that summarizes the idea of modern and capitalist *ethos* that is still preserved in the fundamental rights statements in Constitutions such as those of Bolivia and Ecuador.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, *blanquitud*, environment, rights of nature, modern language of human rights.

1. Introduction

In this essay I seek to introduce the sociological variable of '*blanquitud*' in the debate on multiculturalism, legal pluralism and environmental rights. Conceptualized by the Ecuadorian thinker Bolívar Echeverría[2] '*blanquitud*' does not have an exact translation into other languages. In English it is called whiteness and in French *blanchité*, in Italian *bianchezza*, however, none of these terms, in the politics of their translations, fully account for what lies behind the idea of '*blanquitud*'. In the context of Echeverría's work, the idea of *blanquitud* is somewhat more complex than the sole idea of the color white impregnating some part of the social imaginary. The absence of a common term that summons us to a shared meaning in different languages calls for an explanation, however brief, of what is meant by *blanquitud* in the margins of the discourse sustained by Bolívar Echeverría.

I will mention only a couple of antecedents of the term, not only to discuss this term and its meaning, but also to situate from where I invoke the term *blanquitud*. Indeed, it is important to explain from what theoretical and experiential conditions I carry out a critique of multiculturalism and the idea of the environment that is portrayed in constitutional texts such as the Ecuadorian one.

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[2] Cfr. B. Echeverría, *Imágenes de la blanquitud*, México, 2010.

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2. An idea of *blanquitud*

Let's start with the reference to Max Weber, who in his essay *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* refers to a certain demand or request for a certain type of behavior that capitalism makes of members of contemporary societies. The "spirit" is a behavioral requirement, an ethos of dedication to work, of moderate and virtuous conduct, of seeking stable and continuous benefit. According to Weber, this ethos is that of Protestant Christianity that came out of Northern Europe, spread through the Netherlands (Holland), England, and finally the United States. Max Weber also raised the idea that this aptitude, this ethos, could have an ethnic basis and be connected to certain racial / biological characteristics of individuals. In Weber's words, «If only in the West do we find certain types of rationalization, it seems that one must suppose that the foundation in fact lies in certain hereditary qualities».[3] (Translation is mine).

However, this ethos that Weber speaks of does not refer to the color of the skin, but to a way of being and behaving that white-skinned individuals would have. This way of being and behaving, this ethos or habitus, would be presented as the condition of modern sociologist Bolívar Echeverría that characterizes *blanquitud* as the visibility of the western capitalist ethical identity in the composure of the characters. It could be said that it is a civilizing whiteness and not an ethnic whiteness. That is, you can be colored, you can be indigenous, you can be Asian, but you can also have *blanquitud*. «Blacks, Asians or Latinos who show signs of 'good behavior' in terms of US capitalist modernity become part of *blanquitud*. Even though it may seem unnatural, over time they come to participate in *blanquitud*, to appear as racially white»[4] (my translation).

Modern-capitalist *blanquitud* is recognized, then, in the economic sanctity of bodies, which must be visible, that is, must have a set of visible characteristics that differentiates modern and capitalist winners from pre-modern or non-modern losers (even primitive). These characteristics provide modern winners with greater productive capacity. The clean and orderly physical appearance of the body, of its environment, even the propriety of its language, the discreet possibility of its gaze and the composure of its gestures and movements are requirements of *blanquitud*. Likewise, the rationality of their proposals, the civilized handling of the language (and that if they speak they do so with a translator into a civilized language), the harmonic construction of their proposals (based on economic and legal rationality), the practice of their religiosities and worldviews in their private life (which should not transgress into public space), as well as the cult of civilizing Western knowledge, also constitute a requirement for *blanquitud*.

Now, this condition of *blanquitud*, or requirement for *blanquitud*, seems to have permeated Western human rights discourse. As Boaventura de

[3] M. Weber, *Ética protestante y el espíritu del capitalismo*, México, 67.
[4] B. Echeverría, *Imágenes de la blanquitud*, México, 2010, 65.

Sousa Santos[5] points out, the epistemic condition of human rights was designed to remain on the margins of a capitalist and modern European society – which includes the United States – and, thus, entails a series of problems when applied to the global south, that is, to the colonies and/or states with a colonial past that are found on the other side of the abyssal line. For de Sousa Santos[6] the abyssal line divides the global north from the global south. Located on one side of the abyss western knowledge does not recognize the knowledge on the other side of the abyssal line, that is, it does not recognize non-Western knowledge. This condition is maintained in the discourse of multiculturalism, a discourse in which the rights of indigenous peoples are valid as long as they do not question western law expressed in human rights or in the conquests of western rights of post-war constitutionalism, but complement it, under the logic of metonymic[7] reason that absorbs the rights of indigenous peoples under the mantle of the universality of human rights.

3. *Blanquitud,* human rights and the environment

We can start with some questions. What conditions of demand in the way of being and of behavior (*ethos*) does the modern human rights discourse require?[8] To answer this first question, human rights were intended for human beings conceived as individuals. In this sense, in the eighteenth century these individual rights were developed as civil rights and in the nineteenth century as political rights[9], the transition to social rights did not entail a change in the individualistic paradigm on which human rights are built[10]. As de Sousa Santos points out, «*the concept of law and right was perfectly suited to the bourgeois individualism on the rise, inherent in both liberal theory and capitalism*»[11] (my translation). Indeed, the discourse of law and human rights was elaborated under the tensions typical of the English, French and North American revolutions, which ended up being the foundation of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of 1948. In this regard, René Cassin, one of the jurists who participated in the drafting of the 1948 declaration, argued that Judaism, as part of the Western tradition, gave the world the concept of human rights[12].

[5] Cfr. B. De Sousa Santos, *Justicia entre saberes: epistemologías del sur contra el epistemicidio*, Madrid, 2017; also Cfr. B. De Sousa Santos, *Si Dios fuese un activista de los derechos humanos*, Madrid, 2018.
[6] Cfr. B De Sousa Santos, *Justicia entre saberes: epistemologías del sur contra el epistemicidio*, cit.
[7] On the critique of metonymic reason see de B. Sousa Santos, 2017, cit, in particular Chapter 6 entitled "Crítica de la razón perezosa".
[8] As norms, that is normative prescriptions, human rights seek to influence or direct the behavior of human beings. The prescriptive language of law has this dimension of a subject that understands and obeys (whether obliged or enabled). For further reference see R. Guastini, *Distinguiendo*, Barcelona, 2016.
[9] Cfr. G.A. Bedin, *Los derechos humanos y el neoliberalismo*, Bogotá, 2000.
[10] Cfr. S. Moyn, *No bastan. Los derechos humanos en un mundo desigual*, Madrid, 2019.
[11] B. De Sousa Santos, *Si Dios fuese un activista de los derechos humanos*, Madrid, 2018, 15.
[12] Cfr. P. de Lora, *Memoria y frontera. El desafío de los derechos humanos*, Madrid, 2006.

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According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos, «the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations, the first great universal declaration of the last century, which would be followed by several other declarations, only recognizes two subjects of rights: the individual and the State. Collectivities of people are only recognized to the extent that they become States. It should be noted that when the Declaration was adopted, there were many peoples, nations and communities that did not have a State. Consequently, from the point of view of the epistemologies of the South, we must consider this as a colonialist Declaration (my translation)».[13]

This assertion allows us to derive some answers to the question with which we began this section. The demand for a certain *ethos* behind the declarations of rights refers to a self-interested rational individual. And this is also the seed of the idea of *blanquitud*, insofar as this self-interested rational individual is an effective and efficient subject in relation to the requirements of contemporary capitalism. In other words, it can be a subject with a rationality and a cultural pattern related to Western cultures and consequently related to capitalist production and the reproduction of the conditions of capitalist exploitation.

But we can continue with more questions. What is the relationship of *blanquitud* in the field of multiculturalism, environmental rights and environmental culture? In other words, what influence or determination does the demand for *blanquitud* generate in the multiculturalist discourse of environmental rights, as part of the catalogs of fundamental rights that we find in the Constitutions of states with a colonial past?

Raquel Irigoyen[14] carried out an analysis of the closeness between neoliberalism and multiculturalism when she classified the cycles of Latin American constitutionalism and concluded that today we live in the multicultural cycle of constitutionalism under its plurinational variant. In the same way, Farit Rojas[15] agrees with Irigoyen and considers that the development of multiculturalism in Latin American constitutionalism coincided with the proposals for reform and modernization of the State that led many States in Latin America to embrace a state model that, from the field of some discourses of the economy, was called "neoliberal". Thus, the constitutional reforms of Colombia in 1991, of Peru in 1993, of Bolivia in 1994 and of Ecuador in 1996 and 1998 could be considered part of the multiculturalist and neoliberal discourse[16].

Understanding multiculturalism as coinciding with neoliberalism, we can affirm that it continued and emphasized the demand for an ethos of *blanquitud* with regard to the subject of human rights, whether these are

[13] B. De Sousa Santos, *Si Dios fuese un activista de los derechos humanos*, Madrid, 2018, 19.

[14] Cfr. R. Irigoyen, *El horizonte del constitucionalismo pluralista: del multiculturalismo a la descolonización*, en C. Rodríguez Garavito, *El derecho en América Latina. Un mapa del pensamiento jurídico del siglo XXI*. Buenos Aires, 2010.

[15] Cfr. F. Rojas, *Constitución y deconstrucción*, La Paz, 2018.

[16] Despite progress made in critiquing neoliberalism – at least from a discursive point of view as evidenced in the Ecuadorian constitutional process as well as in the Bolivian one, and in particular in regard to the preamble of the Bolivian Constitution of 2009 – the so-called plurinational constitutionalism carries many remnants of multiculturalism.

individual rights or collective rights or rights of indigenous peoples. It is in these margins of rights generation that the so-called environmental rights still appear in an anthropocentric language.

If the environmental concern is related to the rights of people, to the management of natural resources and to the development model, the concern lies in trying to answer the question of how to guarantee production, the development of modern and capitalist life for people, without diminishing the potential of nature as a resource, in order to continue exploiting it?

In this case, the concern for the environment is a concern about how to reproduce the means of production of the modern capitalist subject's way of life. This concern could have a contradiction, because if it is the capitalist means of production that threaten the environment, the most that could be achieved is a reduction of ecological and environmental damage, but never its elimination. And this contradiction would be a "tug of war" between the defenders of the environment, the State, and the great capitalist interests, to reduce carbon emissions and the deforestation of forests, to reduce cruelty against animals in contrast to development models that can present policies of extractivism and destruction of flora and fauna.

In 2021, the United States returned to the Paris agreement on climate change, which besides being good news, the Paris agreement is precisely the commitment of developed nations for the global reduction of greenhouse gases, which does not cease to be a continuation in the logic of contemporary capitalist ethos, moderated in relation to a series of complex data associated with contemporary capitalist production.

But if the concern for the environment is related to a change of civilizational paradigm and, consequently, to a change in the conception of rights, that is to say that rights are not only of human beings, but of living beings, and nature ceases to be a natural resource, to become a subject of rights[17], what is questioned and criticized would be none other than the conception of the modern and capitalist subject, and consequently of Law, understood as a device that extends this type of model of modern and capitalist humanity, a model of law that concentrates on the category of subject.

However, a new contradiction arises, for if Law and the very notion of rights have been shaped these last centuries as rights of modern and capitalist subjects, how could law respond to a change of civilizational paradigm? Is legal language sufficient to carry out this paradigm shift?

There are many examples of this paradigm shift in Latin American Constitutions. I will mention one of the Constitutions that are heirs of multiculturalism but have advanced to a plurinational logic; I am referring to the Constitution of Ecuador, considered the first Constitution that constitutionalizes the right of nature, still referring to the subject category, but shifting from anthropocentrism to biocentrism in its considerations, in particular the articles dedicated to characterizing the so-called rights of nature.

[17] Cfr. L. Estupiñan; C. Storini; R. Martínez; A. de Carvalho, *La Naturaleza como sujeto de derechos en el constitucionalismo democrático*, Bogotá, 2021.

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The Ecuadorian Constitution mentions in article 10 that nature will be the subject of those rights recognized by the Constitution, which means that "apparently" nature is not an object on which rights fall upon, but rather it is "apparently" a subject of rights. It could be criticized at the beginning that it is not yet detached from the subject category as centrality. And with this declaration a whole chapter on the rights of nature is deployed in the CPE of Ecuador, let's see some articles (translation and underlining is mine):

Art. 71.- Nature or Pacha Mama, where life is reproduced and realized, has the right to full respect for its existence and the maintenance and regeneration of its vital cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes.

Any person, community, peoples, or nationality may demand from the public authority the fulfillment of the rights of nature. In order to apply and interpret these rights, the principles established in the Constitution shall be observed, as applicable. The State shall encourage natural and legal persons, and collectives to protect nature, and shall promote respect for all the elements that make up an ecosystem.

Art. 72.- Nature has the right to restoration. This restoration shall be independent of the obligation of the State and natural or legal persons to compensate individuals and groups that depend on the affected natural systems.

In cases of serious or permanent environmental impact, including those caused by the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources, the State shall establish the most effective mechanisms to achieve restoration, and shall adopt the appropriate measures to eliminate or mitigate the harmful environmental consequences.

Art. 73.- The State shall apply precautionary and restrictive measures for activities that may lead to the extinction of species, the destruction of ecosystems or the permanent alteration of natural cycles.

The introduction of organisms and organic and inorganic material that may definitively alter the national genetic patrimony is prohibited.

Art. 74.- Individuals, communities, peoples and nationalities shall have the right to benefit from the environment and natural resources that allow them a *buen vivir* [to live well].

Art. 83.- The duties and responsibilities of Ecuadorian men and women are, without prejudice to others provided for in the Constitution and the law:

(...)

6. To respect the rights of nature, preserve a healthy environment and use natural resources in a rational and sustainable manner.

This set of articles of the Ecuadorian Constitution shows the tension we referred to: on the one hand it recognizes the rights of nature and consequently we are approaching a kind of civilizational paradigm shift (a shift from anthropocentrism to biocentrism), but slowly the right of nature to *restoration* is introduced, which takes for granted a fact: *the degradation of nature*. However, there is a change in terms, from talking about *nature* to talking about *the environment* and then about *natural wealth* and finally about *natural resources*. A very important terminological mutation. That is, nature is recognized as a subject of rights, but in the constitutional grammar this nature is transformed into environment, natural wealth, and natural

resources ready to be exploited, i.e., it returns once again to the reification of nature or naturalized nature, which, as Descola explains, is an anthropocentric nature[18].

Thus, although rights to nature are recognized, rights over nature are progressively recognized, and the capitalist *ethos* that configures rights only to human beings to ensure their participation in the logics of capitalist development reappears. An *ethos* of *blanquitud* that is not about the color of the skin, but about the *way of being and behaving*, i.e., about the practices and institutions that make this right possible.

If the idea of conceiving nature as a subject and not as an object is linked to a change of civilizational paradigm, indigenous peoples would be the subjects that generate this change of civilizational paradigm –even nature is called with a Quechua word "Pachamama"; however, the capitalist *ethos* of *blanquitud* emerges when the rights of indigenous peoples regarding the environment are enumerated, as we will see below (emphasis is mine):

Art. 57.- The following collective rights shall be recognized and guaranteed to the communes, communities, indigenous peoples and nationalities, in accordance with the Constitution and the covenants, conventions, declarations and other international human rights instruments:

(...)

6. Participate in the use, usufruct, management, and conservation of the renewable natural resources found in their lands.

7. Free, prior and informed consultation, within a reasonable period of time, on plans and programs for prospecting, exploitation and commercialization of non-renewable resources found on their lands that may affect them environmentally or culturally; to participate in the benefits of such projects and to receive compensation for the social, cultural and environmental damages they cause them. The consultation to be carried out by the competent authorities shall be mandatory and timely. If the consent of the consulted community is not obtained, they shall proceed in accordance with the Constitution and the law.

8. Conserve and promote their biodiversity and natural environment management practices. The State shall establish and implement programs, with the participation of the community, to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

(...)

12. Maintain, protect and develop collective knowledge; their ancestral sciences, technologies and knowledge; genetic resources containing biological diversity and agrobiodiversity; their medicines and traditional medicine practices, including the right to recover, promote and protect ritual and sacred places, as well as plants, animals, minerals and ecosystems within

[18] Philippe Descola explains the difference between natural nature (the one that exists and presents itself) and naturalized nature, i.e., the useful version of nature for human beings, as property, resource, development, etc. Naturalized nature would be the way to call this nature object, i.e. ready for exploitation. Whereas natural nature would be ungraspable. For more information see P. Descola, *Más allá de la naturaleza y cultura*, Buenos Aires, 2012.

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their territories; and the knowledge of the resources and properties of fauna and flora.

Source: Political Constitution of the State of Ecuador, 2008.

The good indigenous person who sees in nature a natural resource shows signs of "good behavior", in terms of capitalist modernity and starts to participate in *blanquitud*. In other words, he understands that he must participate in the benefits of the projects of prospecting, exploitation and commercialization of non-renewable resources. He can call, *prima facie Pachamama* to what later will be *a natural resource*, to what later will be *the thing* on which it is necessary to generate the greatest exploitation[19].

It is this good behavior that I call *blanquitud*, and that I wanted, by way of provocation, to introduce in this debate in the Italian academy. Given that this academy is dedicated to thinking about environmental constitutionalism as a recognition of other systems of rights, other cosmovisions, other values and principles that organize the idea of proper rules and procedures on which legal pluralism is based, it should also include a critique of the language of rights, of its anthropocentrism[20], and of its modern affiliation to the idea of *blanquitud*.

4. The Bolivian Constitution and its possibilities of decentering anthropocentrism

Although the Bolivian Constitution of 2009 has not developed a section on the rights of nature (although there are laws, i.e. infra-constitutional norms on the subject), we do see some articles dealing with the same tension of decentering anthropocentrism (Article 33 of the Bolivian Constitution) and the very idea of Pachamama, which although it is not in the articles of the Constitution, it is in its preamble.

Article 33.

People have the right to a healthy, protected, and balanced environment. The exercise of this right must allow individuals and collectivities of present and future generations, as well as other living beings, to develop in a normal and permanent manner.

Source: Bolivian Political Constitution 2009 (emphasis is mine)

In the Bolivian case, nature is treated as a natural resource and the care established in the Constitution refers to the way natural resources are

[19] Even the so-called first sentence in which nature is considered as a subject of rights, I am referring to the judgment of the Provincial Court of Loja of March 30, 2011, escapes from the western logic of law. Roberto Viciano refers to it as follows: "it is curious how the courts of justice, both the Provincial Court and the Constitutional Court, place special emphasis on the documentary evidence provided and the lack of an environmental impact report. Moreover, it would seem as if the bulk of their ratio decidendi depends on the absence of such a report, something that does not derive specifically or univocally from the consideration of nature as a subject of rights, but of institutional guarantees or environmental rights in the traditional sense" (R. Viciano in L. Estupiñan; C. Storini; R. Martínez; A. de Carvalho, *La Naturaleza como sujeto de derechos en el constitucionalismo democrático*. Bogotá, 2021, 152)

[20] R. Ávila Santa Maria, *La Utopía del Oprimido. Los derechos de la Pachamama (naturaleza) y Sumak Kawsay (buen vivir) en el pensamiento crítico, el derecho y la literatura*, Madrid, 2019.

used, as can be seen when the Bolivian constitutional text refers to the aims of the State in Article 9 of the CPE. The same happens with the rights of indigenous peoples, which are established in Article 30 of the Constitution, in this set of rights that are enunciated, nature is also treated as a natural resource and the tension subsists in the form or way in which its use is managed.

An important milestone in the Bolivian constitutional text is found in article 33 (mentioned *ut supra*), which develops the right to the environment and decenters the anthropocentric logic of the language of rights by recognizing rights to other living beings and referring to the rights of future generations. As with the recognition of the rights of nature referred to above with respect to the Ecuadorian Constitution, the new language of rights required to speak of nature as a subject of rights, or of living beings as a subject of rights, is still absent in the development of the constitutional texts referred to.

As Eugenio Raúl Zaffaroni points out, referring to the article 33 of the Bolivian Constitution: «Although this text enunciates the environmental issue as a right of a social and economic nature, heading the chapter referred to such rights, and with this it seems to lean towards the prevailing trend of considering it a right of humans, in its text it does not fail to refer to *other living beings*, which means recognizing them rights»[21] (my translation)

It is clear that these environmental rights would not only be human rights, but above all, rights of living beings. However, as in the Ecuadorian Constitution, the Bolivian Constitution ends up conceiving nature as a natural resource, affirming once again the limitations in the language of rights when different logics are present, such as considering a holder of rights different from the modern – traditional – holder of human beings, despite the fact that this holder, thought as a subject, still drags a part of the western tradition of Law.

5. By way of conclusion: *blanquitud* imagines indigenous peoples

The Bolivian Constitution characterizes indigenous nations and peoples based on a chronological determination, as can be seen in Articles 2 and 30 of the Constitution.

Article 2. Given the pre-colonial existence of the indigenous native peasant nations and peoples and their ancestral dominion over their territories, their self-determination is guaranteed within the framework of the unity of the State, which consists of their right to autonomy, to self-government, to their culture, to the recognition of their institutions and the consolidation of their territorial entities, in accordance with this Constitution and the law.

Article 30. I. All human collectivity that shares cultural identity, language, historical tradition, institutions, territoriality and cosmovision, whose existence is prior to the Spanish colonial invasion, is an indigenous native peasant nation and people.

[21] E.R. Zaffaroni, *La naturaleza como persona: Pachamama y Gaia*, in Vicepresidencia del Estado, *Bolivia. Nueva Constitución Política del Estado. Conceptos elementales para su desarrollo normativo*, La Paz, 2010, 119-120.

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Source: Bolivian Political Constitution 2009 (emphasis is mine)

The past –expressed as pre-colonial existence, ancestral domain, existence prior to the Spanish colonial invasion– is the condition for the contemporary existence of indigenous peoples (also called indigenous originary peasant peoples). In other words, in order to apply in our present time, the articles of the Constitution referring to indigenous native peasant peoples, it is necessary that this subject claims an existence prior to the colonial invasion. This condition was introduced by the proposals of the indigenous organizations themselves in the development of the Bolivian constituent process in 2006-2009.

What does it mean, then, to be contemporary for an indigenous people? It seems that it means to be dislocated in time, a phenomenon that the anthropologist Johannes Fabian[22] has called the allochronous condition of the subject, that is, the condition that in order to be of this time, to be contemporary, it is also necessary to pretend to be of another time. The allochronous condition or denial of coevalness refers to a dislocation or temporal separation in the present with respect to a subject that is considered to be of the past.

This allochronous condition is configured in a colonial device. For example, in order for indigenous autonomies to be effective in Bolivia, they must pass an allochrony *test*. The portal of the Plurinational Electoral Body points out, as one of the first requirements to move forward in the approval of the Autonomous Statute – the basic institutional norm for the exercise of autonomy – of the indigenous community, the next previous step:

For the conformation of an Original Indigenous Peasant Autonomy (AIOC for its acronym in Spanish) in an Original Indigenous Peasant Territory (TIOC for its acronym in Spanish) or a municipality, governmental viability and a population base are required. The Vice-Ministry of Autonomy will certify the condition of ancestral territories, currently inhabited by the claimant peoples and nations, and their governmental viability, that is to say, the existence, representativeness and effective functioning of an organizational structure that includes all the organizations constituted in the territory[23].

This attribution granted to the State to certify ancestry is a way of verifying whether the people seeking access to autonomy is indeed an indigenous people. Now, what is the parameter to know if a people is indigenous? The answer seems to be ancestrality, i.e., in order to be recognized as indigenous in the present, one has to come from the past and appear to be indigenous.

The journal of the Plurinational Electoral Body called "Andamios", published, in February 2017, an issue titled "Indigenous Self-Government Today" presenting a series of articles and essays dedicated to indigenous autonomies. The article by Paulino Guarachi, researcher, expert in indigenous autonomies, and former Vice Minister of Peasant Affairs, is dedicated to the *Uru Chipaya* nation and the way in which it consolidated its Autonomous Statute. The article in question reads:

[22] Cfr. J. Fabian, *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes his Object*, New York, 1983.

[23] See https://www.oep.org.bo/aioc/ (visited on July, 28th, 2022, emphasis is mine).

«The people of the Uru Chipaya Nation had taken the unanimous decision, in the deliberative instances of the four ayllus and at the municipal level (Chawkh Parla), to access the Native Indigenous Autonomy of the Uru Chipaya Nation through the conversion of the municipality, after a wide debate and analysis where they established the reasons previously exposed and appointed Tata Felix Lazaro as Mallku of the Native Indigenous Autonomy. According to the DS. N° 231, the native authorities presented their case in the Ministry of Autonomies and obtained the Certificate of Ancestral Territory of Uru Chipaya, for which they presented studies and investigations of anthropologists and ethnohistorians, who emphasized that the Uru Chipaya native nation is the oldest culture of Bolivia. In the meeting room of the Municipal Government there is a banner that says: 'Ancestry, Identity and millenary culture for more than 6,000 years'»[24] (translation and emphasis is mine).

Anthropological surveys and studies are presented to prove the ancestry or antiquity of these cultures, a requirement in Bolivia to be considered indigenous. In other words, it is someone else (the State, the discipline of anthropology, the valid and official knowledge) who has the authority to name and decide if one is or is not indigenous.

In an interview with Pedro Pachaguaya[25], anthropologist and researcher in indigenous issues, it was mentioned that many communities are concerned about resembling the image that has been made of them, and for this they have been turning to experts looking for ways to repeat the necessary elements to pass the *test* of indigenous originality. The curious thing, according to Pachaguaya's statements, is that some communities do not have all the elements that are expected of them, however they are willing to include them and even invent them in order to be considered suitable to be ancestral and ancient.

These requirements of ancestry, of antiquity, are nothing more than allochronous devices of a *coloniality of time*. The adjective allochronous is used, as an antonym of isochronous, to situate the indigenous subject in another time. According to Johannes Fabian this has repercussions in *denying contemporaneity* (*coevalness*) to the indigenous, despite the fact that they are people who live in the same time, *in the same time* as "we": the non-indigenous. In Fabian's words, «how has anthropology defined and constructed its object - the Other? The search for an answer has been guided by a thesis: Anthropology emerged and established itself as an allochronic discourse; it is a science of the other man in another Time. It is a discourse whose referent has been removed from the present of the speaking/writing subject. This "petrified relation" is a scandal. (...) As relations between peoples and societies that study and those that are studied, relationships between anthropology and its objects are inevitably political; production of knowledge occurs in the public forum of intergroup, interclass, and international relations. Among the historical conditions under which our discipline emerged and which affected its growth and differentiation were the rise of capitalism and its imperial-colonial expansion into the very

[24] P. Guarachi, *Autogobierno indígena hoy*, in *Revista Andamios*, OEP, La Paz, 2017, 17.
[25] Interviews conducted between December 2 and 3, 2018 at legal pluralism research planning meetings.

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societies that became the target of our inquiries. For this to occur, the expansive, aggressive, and oppressive societies which we collectively and inappropriately call the West needed Space to occupy. More profoundly and problematically, they required Time to accommodate the schemes of a one-way history: progress, development, modernity (and its negative mirror images: stagnation, underdevelopment, tradition). In short, *geopolitics* had its foundation in *chronopolitics»* [26].

As Fabian points out, anthropology created its object on the basis of complex translations of spatial distance into temporal distance. The word "indigenous", in its multiple uses, condenses these translation exercises, which are games with social time; that is, games with social relations understood as relations between times. The term "indigenous" designates, in its origin, a taking of distance from the one who enunciates it. In Latin, *inde-gens inde*: *from there and gens*: *people*, that is to say "people from there"; although the adverb *inde* in its full extension evokes a temporal distance: "since then"[27].

The indigenous, then, is a construct that conditions its existence to an original time, as we saw on the pre-existence of the indigenous (article 2) and the characterization of what an indigenous people is (article 30). But it has also been attributed to the indigenous a frozen time (remote, ancestral) necessarily verifiable, the same that prepared the rhetoric of the ethnographic present, the same that allowed the anthropological experts to be the ones to give "faith" that the practices enjoy "lack of contemporaneity" or *coevalness*. The irony of "being indigenous" lies in pretending to be, in this time, from another time. Therefore, on the subjective level, it is practically impossible to be sure whether or not one is "indigenous".

But how does the way in which non-indigenous people imagine indigenous people relate to the way in which non-indigenous people imagine nature? My hypothesis is that *blanquitud* relates them. The imagined indigenous cannot be other than the good indigenous, guardian of the fields, the forests, the eco-systems, that is to say, of the nature imagined from the West. But, willing to be part of a prior consultation, for the exploitation of natural resources, thus participating in the benefits resulting from such exploitation, as established in paragraph I of Article 403 of the Bolivian Constitution:

Article 403.

I. The integrality of the original indigenous peasant territory is recognized, which includes the right to land, to the exclusive use and exploitation of renewable natural resources under the conditions determined by law; to prior and informed consultation and to the participation in the benefits from the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources found in their territories; the faculty to apply their own rules, administered by their representative structures and the definition of their development according to their cultural criteria and principles of harmonious coexistence with

[26] J. Fabian, *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes his Object*. New York, 1983, 143.

[27] The term aboriginal is much more interesting and expressive from the Latin *ab origene*, that is to say of that which is of origin, of the beginning, of a remote past time that is seen from the present.

nature. The indigenous native peasant territories may be composed of communities.

Source: Bolivian Political Constitution 2009 (emphasis is mine)

It is no coincidence that the ILO 169 Convention, the starting point of liberal multiculturalism that led to a series of constitutional reforms in Latin America and included prior consultation, coincides with neoliberalism. Basically, prior consultation with indigenous peoples refers to a moment in global capitalism, in which transnational corporations seeking to exploit natural resources are entering into a conversation with indigenous peoples to make them part of the benefits of global capitalism.

Thus, both the imagined indigenous and the imagined nature, are united by a demand for *blanquitud*, as an effective and efficient device for the requirements of contemporary capitalism. In other words, the indigenous must be an allochronic subject but akin to capitalist production and to the reproduction of the conditions of capitalist exploitation that require nature as a thing, an object, a resource.

Furthermore, there is a condition of performativity in *blanquitud* that can be found in authoritative and binding legal devices. As Bourdieu points out:

[B]y saying things authoritatively, that is, in front of everyone and in the name of everyone, publicly and officially, it wrests them from the arbitrary, sanctions them, sanctifies them, consecrates them by making them exist, as conforming to the nature of "natural" things[28] (Translation is mine).

To be indigenous insofar as the imagination that non-indigenous people make of them is part of this form of *blanquitud* that the Bolivian state and other Latin American states have consolidated with respect to the indigenous. As Slavoj Zizek points out, «that unalienated savagery is a 'necessary complement' of the myth of civilized modernity»[29]. The indigenous, as well as naturalized nature, still belong in their names and languages to an *ethos* of *blanquitud* that in this case names them.

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[28] P. Bourdieu, *¿Qué significa hablar?: Economía de los intercambios lingüísticos*, Madrid, 2001.

[29] S. Zizek, quoted by J. Comaroff, J. Comaroff, *Etnicidad S.A.*, Buenos Aires, 2012, 47.

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